

A Message From the Chairman



Marc A. Buoniconti became the second Chairman of the Citizens' Independent Transportation Trust (CITT) in the spring of 2004. He is one of the original members of the CITT having been appointed in 2003. As CITT Chairman, Mr. Buoniconti presides over all meetings of the Trust and serves as an ex-officio member of the three subcommittees. He has long been the Ambassador for the Miami Project to Cure Paralysis, but has been more than willing to add oversight of the transportation surtax to his agenda. Recently we sat down and spoke with Mr. Buoniconti about his experiences.

What led you to apply to become a member of the CITT?

I first learned about the CITT at a regular monthly meeting of the Coral Gables Rotary Club in 2002, where the People's Transportation Plan (PTP) was on the agenda for a presentation. I was immediately interested because, as much as I love this community, I hate the traffic congestion. So I listened to the projects that were planned and the benefits we could receive by paying a half-cent more in sales tax. The discussion of a citizen oversight board, to be called the Citizens' Independent Transportation Trust (CITT), particularly caught my attention because I felt that it was critical to delivering the projects being promised to the public.

Would you encourage others to consider serving on the CITT?

Yes, as long as they are prepared to take it very seriously and want to be a CITT member for the right reasons. Being a member of the CITT is a lot of work and requires much time and energy. Anyone interested in serving has to make a commitment to the CITT and be ready to deal with the challenges associated with a political appointment. However, if you want to make a difference in the community and you're serious about working hard and want to be a part of a groundbreaking organization, you would enjoy the experience of serving on the CITT.

What do you feel are the greatest challenges that you faced as a CITT member?

Since the inaugural meeting of the CITT, the members have been frustrated with the lack of "true" independence that was prom-

ised to the citizens during the campaign to pass the surtax. I created the joint meetings between the CITT and the Board of County Commissioners (BCC), which are held bi-monthly to discuss ongoing issues related to Miami-Dade Transit (MDT), Public Works Department (PWD), the PTP, as well as the CITT's independence.

In April 2006, the CITT held a retreat to discuss and present to the BCC a series of ordinance changes that would give us the independence promised in 2002. Recently, three specific ordinance changes were presented to the BCC on behalf of Commissioner Carlos Gimenez. Usually, in consideration to the supporting commissioner, the BCC would pass the issue on first reading and allow it to proceed to a public hearing. As the incoming CITT Chairman in 2004, I made a conscious effort to open the lines of communication with the BCC in order to demonstrate our respect for their political office and to allow for cordial and cooperative dialogue. Surely, one would expect the BCC to allow the CITT the courtesy of a public forum to discuss the rationale of the three proposed ordinance changes. Regrettably, the BCC denied two of the three ordinance changes on first reading. Certainly, the CITT will be present at the public hearing in September to ensure the passage of the remaining ordinance change. While indeed this is a major setback for the CITT and the citizens of Miami-Dade County, we will continue to work with the BCC regarding the independence of the CITT.

Delivering contracts on time and on budget has been a great challenge because we are relying on state and federal legislative bodies to provide some of the funding for PTP projects. We are struggling to deliver as many projects as expected because projects are more expensive than previously estimated and were not budgeted properly as reflected in the many pro formas submitted to the CITT. Our financial consultant has uncovered several inconsistencies in the budget and is working on our behalf with MDT and PWD to rectify the situation and to develop a pro forma that is fiscally sound with realistic projections and timelines. The CITT is doing the best it can and is trying to deliver as many projects as possible, but the public needs to know the truth that it is certain that all the projects that were promised to the public will not be delivered.

Do you feel that the County's transportation problems can be solved by the projects in the PTP?

Yes, the PTP has all the right projects, but insufficient funds to accomplish all of its goals. The timetable is a problem too because we have 30 years of projects that need to be done right now. The County

needs another half-cent added to the transportation surtax to do the projects in the time frame needed; the public is getting about a half-penny's worth of projects now and we are playing catch-up. Tax receipts are up about 10% over last year, which is good, but think about all the additional traffic that goes with that. The projects in the PTP are excellent and will resolve some transportation problems in the County; but it's almost too little too late, we need extra revenue to try to move it forward quicker.

Did you come to the CITT with a transportation wish list and, if so, how many of those wishes have been fulfilled?

I want to see Miami continue to grow into a world class community where residents, businesses and tourists can rely on effective, efficient and reliable modes of transportation. Everyone needs to make a strong commitment to solve these problems, both the BCC and citizens. Voters stood up for the half-cent and now they need to scream to their elected officials to deliver on those promises.

What lessons have you learned in dealing with transportation issues, county departments, peer CITT members and elected officials?

I've learned what it's like to be married, and by that I mean, I've learned what a good relationship is supposed to have:

compromise, understanding, good communication and respect.

Being a member of the CITT is my first involvement in government and politics, and it has been frustrating at times to see the amount of time it takes to accomplish something. But it has been rewarding too, when everyone is on the same page and you can see how policies and procedures take place that affect people's lives. Most importantly, I have enjoyed the camaraderie of my fellow board members and I am extremely proud to have been chosen to lead this organization.

Where do you see the CITT headed in the coming years?

The CITT will shine as an organization as it gains more independence and as citizens start seeing real projects kick-in, like the rail corridors; a lot of people have been waiting for that. We have done a good job implementing Metrobus, Metromover, and municipal improvements, but those are not as visible as seeing the big projects come out of the ground.

The CITT has set the stage to deliver some wonderful things to the community and that is why it will shine over the next few years when projects get underway. I would say that the best is yet to come, and it's up to the citizens to demand it!

Transportation and Quality of Life

This fall I will return to my sophomore year at Florida State University and if anyone bothers to ask me how I spent my summer, I am prepared with a very interesting answer. I was fortunate to have been selected to participate in the Miami-Dade County Summer Intern Program, and I was assigned to work at the Office of the Citizens' Independent Transportation Trust (OCITT) which is the County department that provides staff support to the Citizens' Independent Transportation Trust (CITT).

The OCITT staff provided me with experiences that broadened my knowledge of County government and that were relevant to my long term goals. Through this experience I learned a great deal about how the County works to deliver quality services to the public.

Quality of life is directly linked to the reliability, efficiency and innovation of public transportation networks that connect communities. It could be said that a community is only as strong as its link to another community where residents can benefit from opportunities for employment, recreation, access to health care and education. When public transportation is effective in connecting people and places, it increases the quality of life of the community. Without an effective means to link neighborhoods, the community stands to lose its economic engine and slows the progress of achieving a higher standard of living.

An effective public transportation system is more than poured concrete and steel beams; it is designed to move residents from point A to point B in the most practical way possible. The goal is to connect people to each other through transportation systems. Without this connection there can be no true access between

communities when mobility alternatives and transportation networks are not provided. There is a loss of the sense of community when this happens.

The PTP addresses this dilemma by linking the desires of the people with government, by becoming an avenue to help the community realize its need for a coordinated and connected public transportation system. In the end, public transportation helps to secure a way of life for many who wish to be an integral part of a mobile community.

The projects in the PTP support creation of a more diverse community by implementing projects that offer more mobility choices. It is important for citizens to understand how transportation systems can influence their life style and standard of living. The quality of transportation options available to the community dictates how easily communities interact with each other. Through the efforts of the CITT, the public will be given the opportunity to travel throughout Miami-Dade County with greater ease.

The bottom line is that public transportation is about moving people from one place to the next and increasing a community's quality of living. But it must be done in an efficient and coordinated manner so that it does not detract from everyday life.

Transportation provides choices and conveniences that lend to a better quality of life for residents of a community. When communities are connected they become vibrant hubs of culture that inspire people to be social, progressive, and enlightened. Aaron Labreque, CITT Intern, 2006



Henry Lee Givens was sworn in for a second four-year term as the CITT member appointed by Commissioner Dennis C. Moss of District 9. The oath of office was administered by Assistant County Attorney Bruce Libhaber at the monthly CITT meeting held on June 28, 2006, at Sunny Isles Beach City Hall.

Following the swearing-in ceremony, Mr. Givens stated "I am gratified by Commissioner Moss' confidence in my work with the CITT, and I look forward to continuing the productive relationships established with my peers on the Trust and with the public."

Municipalities Participate in 5th Annual CITT Workshop

The CITT hosted its 5th annual Municipal Transportation Workshop on June 23, 2006. More than 30 officials from Homestead to Sunny Isles Beach and from Miami Lakes to Miami Beach convened at the Miami Art Museum in downtown Miami. Targeting the thirty-one municipalities that receive the twenty-percent pro rata share of People's Transportation Plan (PTP) funds, the workshop provides a forum for a lively exchange of information and ideas.

The participating municipalities are those that were incorporated by November 5, 2002, the day that voters approved the PTP. Each city receives a share of the funds based on the ratio of its population to the total population in all cities. PTP funds can be used for eligible transit and transportation improvements, such as paving and striping roadways, transportation studies, bus passenger shelters and bus circulator systems.

The Municipal Transportation Workshop allows CITT staff to communicate directly with city officials to discuss program requirements and listen to their concerns. The session featured panel discussions on important topics, such as reporting requirements and project implementation. One panel was made up of municipalities already operating municipal circulators

who shared their experiences with peers considering similar projects. Staff from Miami-Dade Transit, Miami-Dade Public Works Department and the County Attorney's Office were present and participated in the open forum. Dr. Anna E. Ward, the CITT member appointed from County Commission District 3 and former Mayor of El Portal Village, shared first-hand knowledge on the importance of their participation in the municipal component.

"The CITT Municipal Workshop has become the best way for participating municipalities to receive current information on how to use PTP funds to implement projects," stated Nan A. Markowitz, CITT Executive Director.

Transportation partners from across the County were on hand disseminating information on other programs that municipalities can find beneficial. Exhibitors included the Metropolitan Planning Organization, Miami-Dade Transit, South Florida Commuter Services, and the Florida Department of Transportation's "South Florida East Coast Corridor Study."

Feedback from participants was very positive, with many stating that "they were pleased with the information obtained as well as the workshop's open format."

